

Handwashing/Hand Hygiene

Handwashing/hand hygiene, done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections.

Hands Should Be Washed/Decontaminated:

1. **With soap and water when hands are visibly soiled with blood or other body fluids, before eating and after using the restroom. (Refer to CDC Hand Hygiene Guidelines.)**
2. Before and after all direct patient care.
3. After touching blood, body secretions/excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin or objects that are likely to be contaminated.
4. Immediately after gloves are removed.
5. After contact with a patient's intact skin (e.g., when taking a pulse or blood pressure, lifting a patient, etc.).
6. After contact with inanimate objects (including medical equipment) in the immediate vicinity of the patient.
7. As needed between cares or procedures on the same patient to avoid cross-contamination of different body sites.
8. Before eating.
9. After personal hygiene (e.g., blowing your nose, covering a sneeze, using the restroom, etc.).
10. Before performing invasive procedures.

Handwashing Technique

1. Wet hands with running water.
2. Apply antimicrobial soap.
3. Work up a good lather and thoroughly distribute over hands.
4. Vigorously rub hands together for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers, and clean beneath nails.
5. Rinse well under warm water. Let water run back into the sink, not down your elbows.
6. Leaving water on, dry hands with a paper towel.
7. Use a clean paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Use of Alcohol-Based Hand Rubs

1. Apply product to palm of one hand and rub hands together.
2. Cover all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.
3. Use volume of product recommended by the manufacturer.

Handwashing Agents

1. Plain Soap (liquid, bar, leaflet, foam or powdered form) – assists in the mechanical removal of transient microorganisms.

2. Antimicrobial Soap – assists in the mechanical removal and killing or inhibiting both transient and resident flora. Examples of antimicrobial ingredients found in antimicrobial soaps:
 - a. Alcohols
 - b. Chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG)
 - c. Para-chloro-meta-xyleneol (PCMX)
 - d. Hexachlorophene (HCP)
 - e. Triclosan
3. Waterless cleansing agents
 - a. Alcohol-based waterless antiseptics (60% to 95% alcohol most effective)